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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3841st meeting of the Security Council, held on 16 December 1997 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Afghanistan", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security of 14 November 1997 (A/52/682-S/1997/894), which was also considered by the General Assembly.

"The Security Council reiterates its grave concern at the continued military confrontation in Afghanistan, which has caused human suffering and material destruction, which threatens to lead to the disintegration of the country and which represents a growing threat to regional and international peace and security. It deplores the unwillingness of the Afghan warring factions to lay down their arms and cooperate with the United Nations for peace.

"The Security Council stresses that the Afghan conflict has no military solution and that the primary responsibility for finding a peaceful settlement lies with the Afghan parties themselves. It urges all Afghan parties to take genuine confidence-building measures, to agree immediately on a ceasefire, and to engage without preconditions in a political dialogue aimed at achieving national reconciliation, a lasting political settlement of the conflict and the formation of a broad-based, fully representative government that will protect the rights of all Afghans and abide by Afghanistan's international obligations.

"The Security Council deplores the fact that foreign military support to the Afghan parties continued unabated through 1997 and reiterates its call to all States to end immediately the supply of arms, ammunition, military equipment, training or any other military support to all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan, including the involvement of foreign military personnel.

"The Security Council encourages the Secretary-General and Member States to undertake preliminary studies on how an effective arms embargo could be imposed and implemented in a fair and verifiable manner.

"The Security Council insists that the United Nations, as a universally recognized and impartial intermediary, must be given all necessary support so it can continue to play a pivotal, central role in coordinated international efforts, including the efforts of interested countries and organizations, towards a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict. It believes that peace and stability in Afghanistan can best be attained through intra-Afghan political negotiations under United Nations auspices with the active and coordinated assistance of all countries concerned. The Council reiterates its full support for the activities and mandates of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and those of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

"The Security Council supports the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at the establishment of a solid international framework in order to address the external aspects of the Afghan question and, in this context, welcomes the convening of meetings of concerned countries as well as those of the immediate neighbours and other countries.

"The Security Council remains deeply concerned at the continuing discrimination against girls and women and other violations of human rights, as well as at violations of international humanitarian law in Afghanistan.

"The Security Council notes with deep concern the reports about mass killings of prisoners of war and civilians in Afghanistan and supports the Secretary-General's intention to continue to investigate fully such reports.

"The Security Council expresses serious concern over the looting of United Nations premises and food supplies and deliberate restrictions placed on the access of humanitarian organizations to some parts of the country and on other humanitarian operations, and urges all parties to prevent their recurrence.

"The Security Council reiterates that the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan provides a fertile ground for terrorism and illegal drug production and trafficking which destabilize the region and beyond, and calls upon the leaders of the Afghan parties to halt such activities.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to continue to keep it regularly informed about the situation in Afghanistan and his efforts.

"The Security Council will remain seized of the matter."